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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 CAIRO 009135

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

NSC STAFF FOR SINGH

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [EG](#) [EGPHUM](#)

SUBJECT: EGYPT: WIDESPREAD OBSTRUCTION AND VIOLENCE AT  
CLOSING DAY OF PARLIAMENTARY POLLS

Sensitive but Unclassified. Please protect accordingly.

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Summary  
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1. (SBU) December 7 saw runoff races for seats in most parliamentary constituencies in nine provinces of Egypt. Although many polling places appeared to be quiet and functioning normally, there were serious disruptions at many others. Emboffs witnessed security force obstruction of polling places at numerous voting stations. Contacts and press reports confirmed that the phenomenon was widespread. Thugs intended to intimidate opposition voters were also spotted at many sites across the Delta. There were also reports of journalists obstructed, harassed, and in some cases beaten. The current possible death toll from election related violence is 4-6. End summary.

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Security Forces Obstruct Voting  
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2. (SBU) Emboffs visiting constituencies in Nile Delta provinces witnessed 13 instances where security forces had closed down polling stations, apparently to ensure the defeat of popular Muslim Brotherhood candidates.

-- There was also security service closure of at least three polling stations where the NDP candidate (a brother of the Presidential Chief of Staff) was challenging Wafd Party (i.e., secular, liberal) candidate Mahmoud Abaza.

-- Embassy contacts including domestic monitors and journalists confirmed that closures were widespread in the Delta.

-- In many cases, security forces used tear gas to disperse crowds demanding admission polling stations.

-- Roads into and out of the Nile Delta city of Mansoura were reportedly closed by security forces.

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Tear Gas  
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3. (SBU) Emboffs witnessed two instances of apparently unjustified use of tear gas:

-- At Abu Hammad village east of Zagazig, Sharqiyya, an angry crowd gathered in front of a closed polling station. They told poloff that the Egyptian police were the "Israelis" and stated they were living "under occupation." Security forces responded with tear gas.

-- In a second incident witnessed by poloff, police fired tear gas shells, and a police officer fired live ammunition over the heads of demonstrators. Witnesses subsequently told poloff one citizen died of tear gas inhalation in the incident.

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Thugs  
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4. (SBU) There were also reports of thugs throwing stones and bottles, and carrying clubs and machetes, in order to discourage and intimidate prospective voters.

-- A journalist with AP advised poloff that she witnessed thugs carrying machetes disembarking from a police truck near a polling station in Sharqiya province.

-- An embassy contact witnessed thugs raining stones down on prospective voters from rooftops in Nasiriya constituency, Sharqiyya.

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Journalists Obstructed  
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15. (SBU) We witnessed one instance, and received reports of several others, in which journalists were obstructed, harassed, and in at least one case beaten.

-- Emboffs witnessed an Egyptian TV crew ejected by police from a polling station in Sharqiyya province.

-- Contacts also advised the Embassy that an Al-Jazeera crew in Damietta province was harassed and their equipment sabotaged.

-- An American journalist contact advised poloff that he was struck by police and his camera was confiscated in Nasiriya constituency, Sharqiya.

-- Police also attempted to confiscate an emboff's camera in Kafr al-Sheikh province.

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Other Violence  
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16. (SBU) Other instances of election-related violence came to our attention.

-- UK Embassy contact advised poloff that protestors in Sharqiya Province had blockaded and "set fire" to several major roads.

-- An American journalist advised poloff that he had witnessed vigilantes detaining alleged NDP bullies in a building in Zagazig, Sharqiyya province.

-- Poloff saw MB supporters stoning police after police set upon an MB candidate with batons.

-- Nasserist Party Chairman and Parliamentary candidate Dia ed-Din Dawood was reportedly beaten by police in Damietta.

-- The current possible death toll from today's election violence is 4-6.

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